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ABSTRACT

A review of studies conducted from 1973-1984 shows continuing inequalities between rural Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts in Kentucky, particularly in the areas of expenditures, sources of revenue, and holding power. The gap between Appalachian and non-Appalachian school systems in per pupil expenditures and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students is widening. Counties that are dependent primarily on coal production for their economic base generally report the lowest per pupil expenditures and revenues for education. Current strategies for taxation--which exclude unmined minerals and other forms of property--do not allow Appalachian counties to accept greater responsibility for education. This report includes numerous graphs and tables comparing educational costs, per pupil expenditures, and sources of revenue for Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts and showing the percent of economically disadvantaged pupils and sources of public school revenue for 49 Appalachian counties. (JHZ)

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EDUCATION AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES IN APPALACHIAN KENTUCKY

APPALACHIAN DATA BANK REPORT #2
SEPTEMBER 1985

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RESEARCH REPORTS

EDUCATION AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES IN APPALACHIAN KENTUCKY

APPALACHIAN DATA BANK REPORT #2
SEPTEMBER 1985

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HIGHLIGHTS

* **Continuing inequalities exist between Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts in Kentucky, particularly in the areas of expenditures, sources of revenue, and holding power.**

* **The gap between Appalachian and non-Appalachian school systems in per pupil expenditures and the percentage of economically deprived students is widening.**

* **Counties that are dependent primarily on coal production for their economic base generally report the lowest per pupil expenditures and revenues for education.**

* **Current strategies for taxation are inadequate for Appalachian counties to accept greater responsibility for education.**

This report on education factors in Kentucky and financial resources affecting these factors is a product of the Appalachian Data Bank, a project of the Appalachian Center of the University of Kentucky. The purpose of the Appalachian Data Bank is to collect and disseminate information on education unemployment, social services, and economic development in the Central Appalachian Region. This report is the second in a series to be produced by the Data Bank. The data in this report have been extracted from Profiles of Kentucky Public Schools, a publication of the Office of Administrative Services, Kentucky Department of Education.

Introduction

Inequalities and large discrepancies in all facets of education have long existed between Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts in Kentucky. Not only have average achievement scores varied as much or more in Kentucky than in any other state, but in many cases the gaps regarding revenue collection and spending per pupil remain as high today as they did 10 years ago.

The purposes of this report are to provide information on these disparities and to examine their causes. The report is designed to investigate whether disparities have increased or decreased over a 10-year period. Figures from studies made over the decade of 1973-74 to 1983-84 are used to compare several educational characteristics in Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts.

Inequalities in Educational Opportunity

Substantial research has been conducted during the past few years on the status of education in the state of Kentucky. In study after study, the predominantly rural schools of Appalachian Kentucky fared less favorably than urban and non-Appalachian schools in the rest of the state. One such study, completed by the Appalachian Center in 1982 for the Appalachian Regional Commission (DeYoung, et al., 1982) compared school districts in the Bluegrass state on a number of variables including student basic skill performance, dropout and completion rates, teacher qualifications, funding sources, and types of educational expenses. The sponsoring agency (ARC) had hoped to utilize such information as a basis for determining which Appalachian school districts in Kentucky would be most beneficially affected by funded projects it might help to underwrite.

In general, the 1982 study showed significant variations among school districts in the state on almost every measure. Not only were there measurable differences on various student performances on a district by district comparison, but also staffing, funding, and expenditure variables suggested important inequalities within the state. Predictably, rural county districts in the state, as a group, fared particularly poorly in most comparisons. This was especially true for those districts in eastern Kentucky. For example, the 1982 study found that among non-Appalachian districts, the high school completion rate for the 1980 school year was over 70 percent, but for Appalachian districts, the figure was under 60 percent (see Table I). Several districts in the state graduated over 85 percent of students who had been ninth graders three years earlier, while a number of districts graduated fewer than 45 percent of their former ninth graders.

Discrepancies between sources of school revenue and per-pupil expenditures between districts were also clearly visible in this study. For example, two districts in the state spent over $1,400 per student for instruction during the 1979-80 school year, while three school districts in the state spent less than half that much. Furthermore, a number of school districts in the state paid for their school costs almost entirely from local and state funds, while a significant percentage of rural districts, both Appalachian and non-Appalachian, relied heavily on funding from federal sources to support their instructional programs. The pattern which emerged from this investigation of the status of educational conditions was all too clear: significant inequalities in student performance, staffing, and funding in the state of Kentucky were clearly apparent.

TABLE I

PERFORMANCE OF APPALACHIAN AND NON-APPALACHIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS: SELECTED INDICATORS

	Appalachian Districts	Non-Appalachian Districts
Median Percent of Students "Below Normal" on Short Form Test of Academic Skills*		
Grade 3	21.0%	15.3%
Grade 5	18.0	13.0
Grade 7	28.0	20.5
Grade 10	29.5	12.0
Median Percent "Below Normal" on Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills*		
Grade 5	18.0	11.0
Grade 7	19.0	14.0
Grade 10	19.5	18.0
Median Percent of Ninth Graders who Complete High School**		
1973	60.7	70.2
1980	59.4	70.1
1983	60.8	71.4

*Source: De Young, et al., 1981 (Data are for 1980 school year)

**Source: Kentucky Department of Education

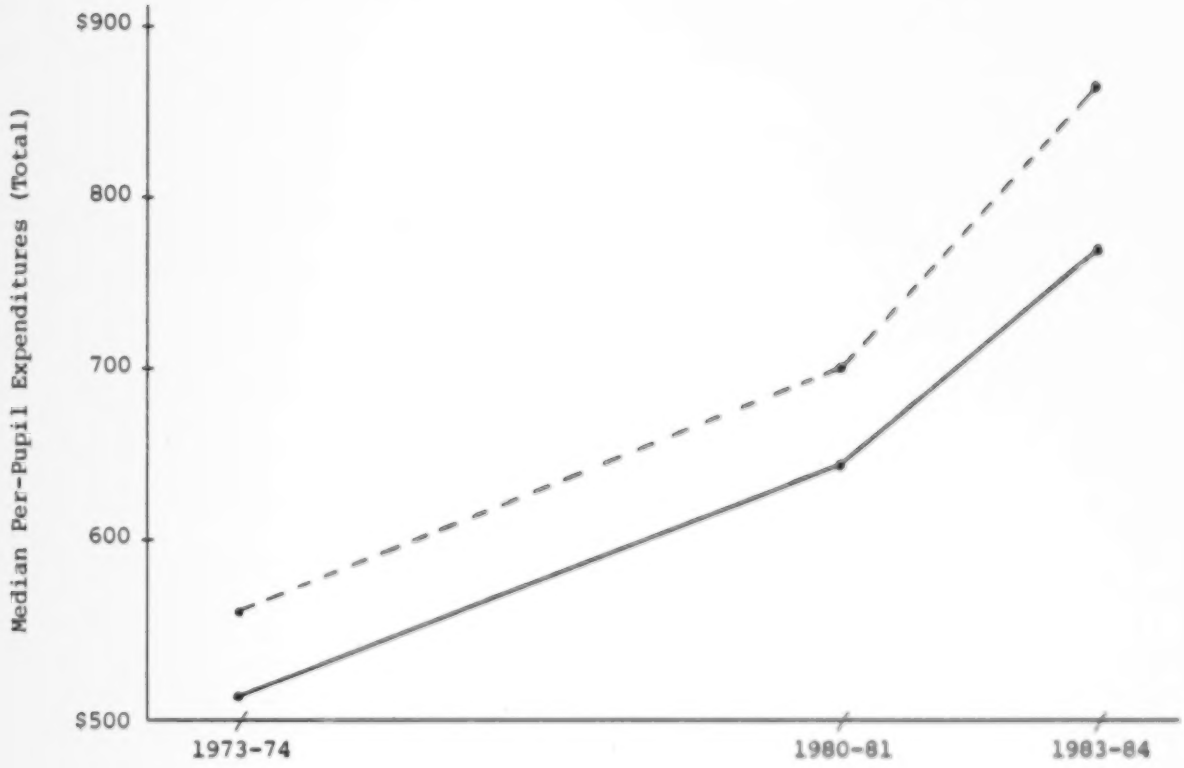
Inequalities Persist: Data Bank Survey, 1973-1984

The information in the DeYoung study was based on data from the 1979-80 school year. An examination of comparable data from an earlier period (1973-74) and a later period (1983-84) for this Data Bank report indicates that the inequalities are persistent. For example, as Graph I illustrates, Appalachian school districts continue to lag behind non-Appalachian districts in per-pupil expenditures; in fact, the gap appears to be widening (see Graph I). In both 1973-84 and 1983-84, the Appalachian students received only about 90 percent as much for public education as did their non-Appalachian counterparts. When these expenditures are broken down into the three major categories of teacher salaries, instructional materials, and administrative costs, the inequalities are even more apparent, with the greatest discrepancies appearing in expenditures for instruction and administration. In fact, over the last decade, the gap actually widened between what Appalachian systems spent for instruction and administrative costs and what non-Appalachian systems spent. Only the gap involving expenditures for instructional materials has decreased (see Graph II).

In addition to these deficiencies, school systems in Appalachian Kentucky tend to be much more dependent upon external sources of revenue. Throughout the decade, Appalachian systems contributed only about 55 percent as much to school expenses from local revenues as non-Appalachian systems. This gap is even larger when only county systems (not independent districts) are compared. Between 1973 and 1984, the amount of school revenue coming from state and federal sources rose significantly throughout Kentucky, but the

GRAPH I

AVERAGE PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES*



Key: ---------- Non-Appalachian public school systems

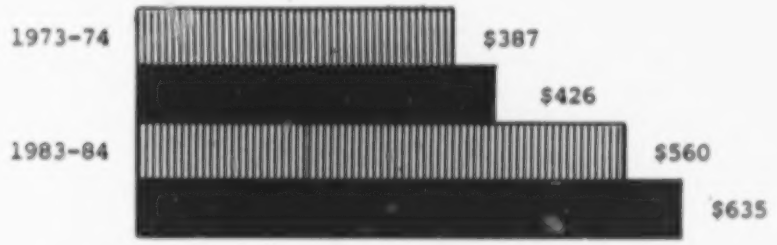
———————— Appalachian public school systems

*Expressed in constant 1972 dollars to control for inflation, using conversion factors from the U.S. Department of Commerce Surveys of Current Business.

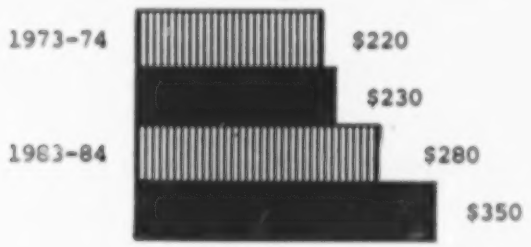
GRAPH II

MEDIAN PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES* FOR INSTRUCTION, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND ADMINISTRATION

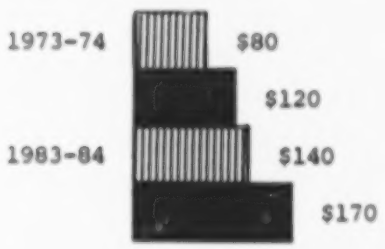
A. Costs Per Pupil for Instruction



B. Costs Per 10** Pupils for Administration



C. Costs Per 10** Pupils for Instructional Materials



Key:

Appalachian school districts

Non-Appalachian school districts

*Expressed as 1972 dollars to adjust for inflation

**Per-pupil cost multiplied by 10 to keep graphs on same scale

proportion of support from local sources declined, leaving schools even more dependent upon state and federal funds than they had been a decade earlier (see Graph III).

Economic conditions in Appalachian counties account for part of the region's heavy dependence on outside funding. Revenue available from federal sources and from the state "power equalization" program is dependent upon the percentage of students in the school systems who are classified as economically deprived. Thus, districts with a higher percentage of economically deprived students receive more per capita in federal aid than districts with a lower percentage. The median proportion of students classified as economically deprived in Appalachian systems exceeded the median proportion of economically deprived students in non-Appalachian systems by almost 60 percent in 1984. Appalachia as a whole was hit harder by the recession of the early 1980s and has been slower to recover than the rest of the country. Unemployment rates in eastern Kentucky counties have averaged from 10 percent to over 25 percent in recent years. As a result of these economic hard times, the percentage of economically deprived students in Appalachian school districts has actually risen over the past decade.

Moreover, economic conditions vary significantly even within Appalachian Kentucky, with those counties which are more dependent upon coal for their economic base generally demonstrating higher unemployment rates and also providing less in the way of per-pupil expenditures for education. Those eastern Kentucky counties which have a more diversified, manufacturing-based economy provide significantly more in the way of expenditures and a higher percent of school revenue from local sources than do either coal or agricultural-based counties, although they still provide considerably less than non-Appalachian districts (see Table II).

GRAPH III

SOURCES OF REVENUE FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS
(Median Percentages of Total Expenditures)

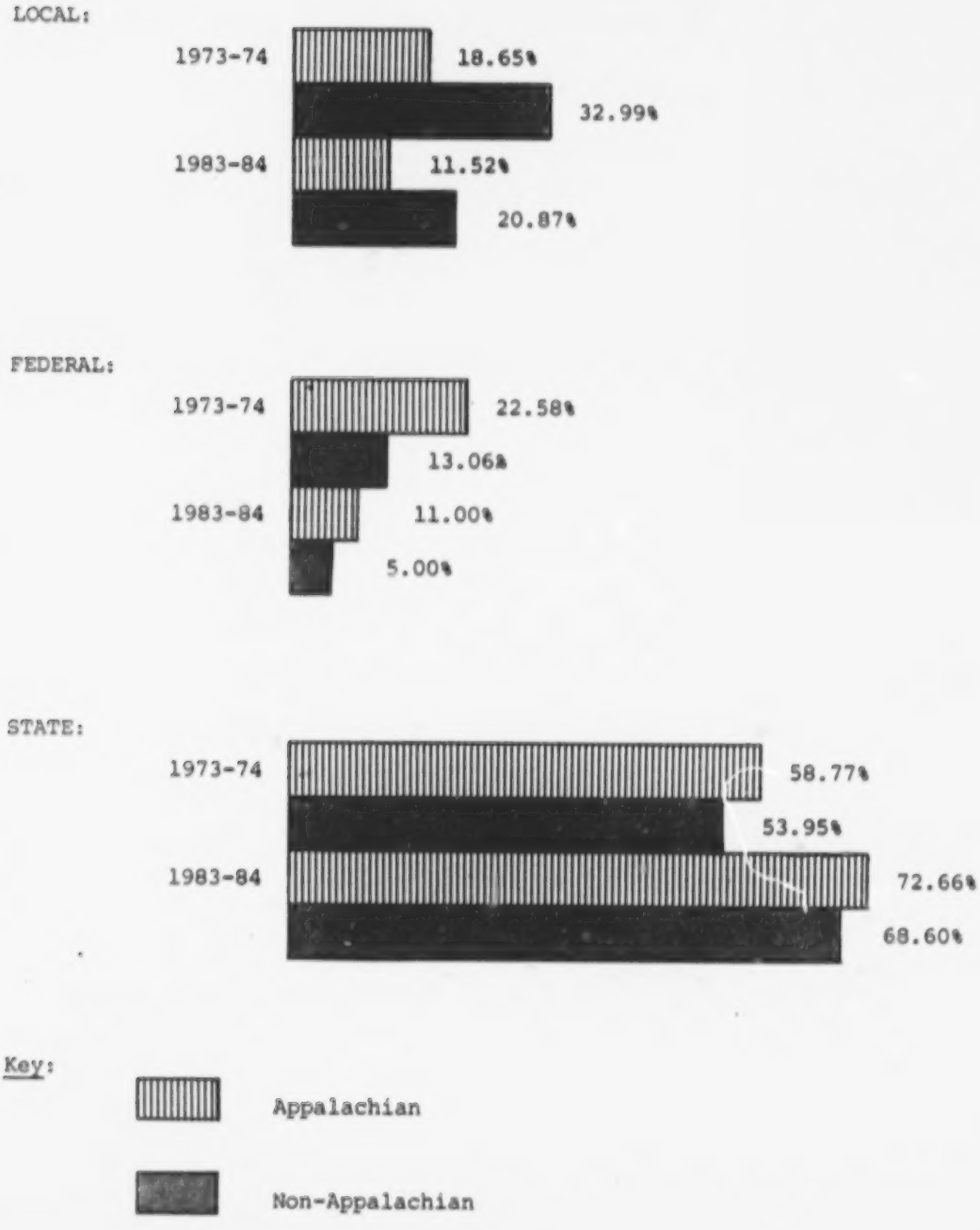


TABLE II

LOCAL ECONOMIC BASE AND SCHOOL FINANCES*

	Eastern Kentucky Districts				Non-Appalachian Districts (N=112)
	Coal (N=14)	Coal & Manuf. (N=17)	No Coal; Manuf. (N=20)	No Coal or Manuf. (N=17)	
Assessed Property Value Per Pupil	$50,465	$60,121	$77,916	$54,062	$98,542
Per-Pupil Expenditures	$ 1,553	$ 1,567	$ 1,648	$ 1,671	$ 1,821
Local Financial Index	0.245	0.360	0.380	0.277	0.435
Percent Children Classified as Economically Deprived	53.9%	48.2%	38.9%	54.0%	28.2%
Percent of School Revenue from Local Sources	6.3%	12.4%	13.8%	6.1%	18.9%

*All figures are medians for school districts; economic base was defined by the counties in which school districts are located as calculated by Duncan and Tickamyer (1982).

A comparison as well of local financial indices shows that cyclical economic conditions in the coalfields do not alone explain the difference in levels of educational support. The local financial index is a measure of the amount of effort a community puts into support of its schools based upon its ability to pay. This index is derived by dividing the local revenue per child in average daily attendance by the assessed value of property per child in average daily attendance. Again, coal counties generally demonstrated the lowest assessed property value per pupil among Appalachian school districts and recorded the lowest local financial index. On the whole, contributions to educational expenses by all Appalachian counties were only 77 percent as great as those by non-Appalachian counties in 1973-74 and only 71 percent as great in 1983-84. Clearly, eastern Kentucky is falling further behind the rest of the state in its ability to provide resources for the education of its children.

Attitudes Toward Education

It has long been assumed that a major factor contributing to the poor quality of Appalachian schools is the lack of commitment to education on the part of mountain residents. Recent studies, however, cast some doubt on this assumption. In a survey of educational attitudes of Kentuckians conducted in 1984, James Hougland and John Stephenson found that Kentuckians as a whole were increasingly concerned over the condition of education in the commonwealth, with over 45 percent of those polled viewing education as one of the top two problems facing the state. The survey found that Appalachian Kentuckians were not significantly different from their non-Appalachian counterparts in their attitudes toward education. While residents of eastern

Kentucky were somewhat more likely to rank economic issues rather than education as the top problem facing Kentucky, they were no less likely than Kentuckians in other regions to support educational reform and increased financing for schools. Given the opportunity, two-thirds of all Kentuckians favored an increase in coal revenues and/or a state lottery as a means of increased financing for education (Hougland and Stephenson, 1984).

Implications

If attitudes toward education and cyclical economic conditions do not entirely explain the problem of inadequate revenues for education in Appalachia, other factors must contribute as well. Key variables appear to be the type of economic development which characterizes the region's economy and the willingness of government to assess and tax valuable resources for the support of education.

As this report indicates, coal counties consistently report lower assessed valuations and per pupil expenditures than do agricultural and manufacturing counties both within and outside of Appalachia. An economy based primarily on extractive industry appears in this case to have a deleterious effect on education. Despite the wealth of natural resources in these counties, little of that wealth finds its way into the rural public school system. Knott County, for example, is one of the largest coal producing counties in Kentucky; yet the Knott school district in 1984 ranked 179th out of the state's 180 school districts in the amount of money spent per pupil and received only 4.1 percent of its annual budget from local tax revenues. Neighboring coal counties such as Pike, Letcher, Floyd, and Perry reported similar deficiencies in school financing and also ranked high in

unemployment, school dropout rates, and percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

Part of the reason for the paucity of local revenues available to education in eastern Kentucky is the consistently low property valuations and school property tax rates in these counties compared to other parts of the state. Much of the surface land and approximately 85 percent of the mineral rights in Appalachian Kentucky are held in large acreages by absentee land and mineral corporations, and this property is usually assessed as undeveloped land and taxed at the minimum rate allowed by the state. The Kentucky Fair Tax Coalition recently found that a typical tract of 81,000 acres of mineral lands in Martin County returned annual property taxes of just $74-76, despite the fact that the tract contained over 55 percent of the coal deposits in the county.

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Kentucky requires that all property be taxed for the mutual benefit of the residents of the state. But the lack of information on the value of minerals in the ground and a state ad valorem tax on unmined coal of only one-tenth of one cent per $100 combine to prevent school systems from benefiting from these mineral resources. In 1982, for example, only 24 of the 50 coal producing counties in Kentucky even listed assessments of unmined coal reserves. These assessments produced a total tax of $2,800. Consequently, the 1983 report of the Kentucky Superintendent's Commission for State School Finance recommended an increase in the unmined minerals tax as a major source of additional revenue for education.

Ironically, those counties with the lowest property assessments per pupil and the lowest tax revenues also have the poorest records of tax collection in the state. Consistently, mountain counties fail to collect

from 5 to 25 percent of the taxes on real property compared to an average of less than 5 percent for the rest of the state. Again, coal counties have the worst record of delinquent taxes and thus the greatest loss of potential revenue for public schools.

Obviously, all of the problems of inadequate resources for education in eastern Kentucky cannot be attributed solely to the predominance of the coal industry in the region. Rural agricultural counties in the mountains rank almost as low on per capita student expenditures as coal counties, and independent school districts in urban centers within coal counties spend significantly more for education than their rural neighbors. But the data in this report indicate that those areas with greater economic diversity and less dependence on a single extractive industry are able to generate more revenue for the education of their children than those counties with less economic diversity. Clearly, educational status and economic diversity (not just economic growth) are linked, and strategies to improve the quality of educational performance in Appalachia must also address the region's limited economic base. It may require greater investment in education to provide a foundation for building a more diversified and self-sustaining local economy. While differences of opinion exist as to the appropriateness of increased taxes on unmined minerals or other forms of property, existing sources of revenue are not allowing Appalachian counties to accept full responsibility for education.

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APPENDICES

I. Real Property Delinquency Rates

II. Education Figures for School Years 1973-74 and 1983-84 in Appalachian (A) and Non-Appalachian (N) Kentucky

III. Appalachian Counties: Financial Support of Public Schools

IV. Appalachian Counties: Percent Economically Deprived Pupils

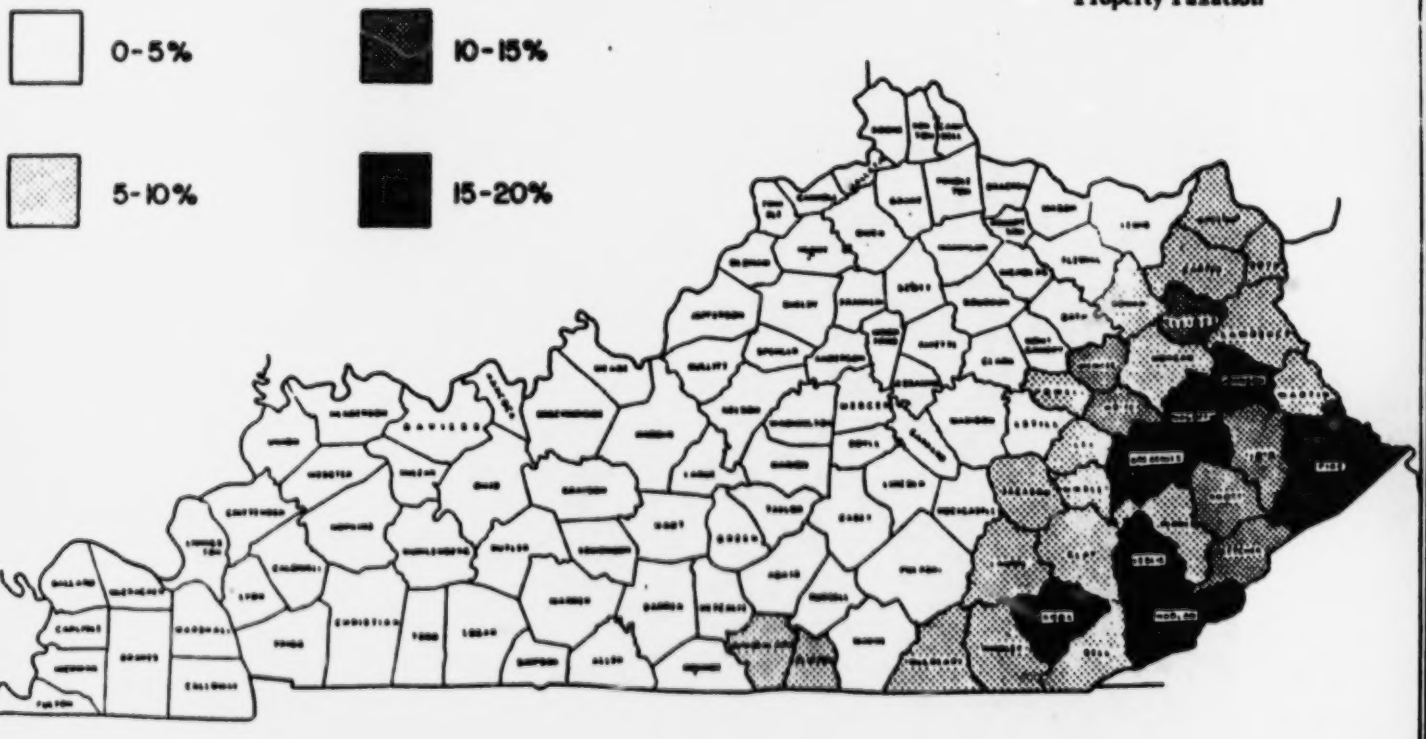
EDUCATION FIGURES FOR SCHOOL YEARS 1973-74 AND 1983-84
IN APPALACHIAN (A) AND NON-APPALACHIAN (N) KENTUCKY

Variable	1973-74			1983-84		
	Region	Figures	A/N as %	Region	Figures	A/N as %
Per-Pupil Expenditures	A	$549.83	91	A	$1659.16	89
	N	604.05		N	1868.25	
Cost Per Pupil for Instruction	A	$409.07	91	A	$1197.37	86
	N	450.89		N	1357.28	
Holding Power	A	60.49%	80	A	61.28%	88
	N	75.24		N	69.76	
Percent State Revenue	A	58.77%	108	A	72.66%	106
	N	53.95		N	68.60	
Percent Federal Revenue	A	22.58%	173	A	15.81	150
	N	13.06		N	10.53	
Percent Local Revenue	A	18.65%	56	A	11.52%	55
	N	32.99		N	20.87	
Percent Economically Deprived	A	46.81%	187	A	48.02%	159
	N	25.01		N	30.15	
Local Financial Index	A	.58	77	A	.35	71
	N	.75		N	.49	
Cost Per Pupil/ Instr. Materials	A	$ 9.13	70	A	$31.86	85
	N	13.03		N	37.38	
Cost Per Pupil/ Administration	A	$23.72	95	A	$60.89	80
	N	24.84		N	$76.13	

REAL PROPERTY DELINQUENCY RATES

1983 TAX YEAR

Source: Department of Property Taxation



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APPALACHIAN COUNTIES

FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

County	Cost/Pupil Current Expenses (Rank)	% Local Revenue (Rank)	Assessed Value/Pupil in Thousands of Dollars (Rank)	Local Financial Index (Rank)
Adair	1535.62 (17)*	6.5 (27)	76,538 (78)	0.17 (14)
Bath	1671.90 (68)	8.8 (43)	68,617 (57)	0.28 (46)
Bell	1515.69 (10)	6.3 (24)	42,941 (15)	0.30 (53)
Boyd	1705.69 (80)	18.6 (108)	103,772 (123)	0.38 (91)
Breathitt	1546.48 (19)	8.7 (41)	58,969 (41)	0.32 (62)
Carter	1671.78 (67)	4.9 (15)	51,666 (29)	0.19 (18)
Casey	1476.48 (4)	5.6 (19)	70,461 (64)	0.16 (11)
Clark	1668.01 (65)	21.8 (127)	116,583 (145)	0.39 (97)
Clay	1580.54 (31)	4.1 (12)	35,192 (4)	0.24 (34)
Clinton	1784.61 (106)	3.3 (7)	52,494 (31)	0.15 (9)
Cumberland	1725.91 (89)	4.9 (16)	74,294 (71)	0.14 (8)
Elliott	1863.15 (129)	5.0 (17)	40,166 (9)	0.28 (45)
Estill	1613.34 (46)	6.1 (22)	54,062 (33)	0.23 (29)
Fleming	1809.16 (113)	12.6 (66)	93,662 (104)	0.31 (59)
Floyd	1502.98 (8)	6.0 (21)	51,603 (28)	0.21 (25)
Garrard	1729.82 (90)	17.5 (101)	115,886 (142)	0.33 (68)
Green	1649.58 (60)	13.3 (70)	80,822 (84)	0.35 (75)
Greenup	1603.62 (39)	11.2 (53)	69,192 (60)	0.32 (63)
Harlan	1530.27 (14)	7.1 (30)	57,817 (40)	0.23 (30)
Jackson	1657.12 (62)	2.9 (5)	38,258 (7)	0.17 (12)
Johnson	1630.03 (51)	7.4 (35)	45,620 (19)	0.32 (61)
Knott	1438.56 (2)	4.1 (11)	40,367 (10)	0.20 (19)
Knox	1567.03 (26)	3.7 (10)	41,328 (13)	0.19 (17)
Laurel	1486.81 (5)	7.4 (33)	70,034 (62)	0.20 (21)
Lawrence	1532.94 (16)	6.3 (25)	59,259 (42)	0.23 (31)
Lee	1642.91 (55)	8.2 (39)	49,213 (25)	0.37 (85)
Leslie	1586.73 (32)	5.2 (18)	55,815 (37)	0.18 (15)
Letcher	1490.54 (6)	7.2 (31)	48,259 (22)	0.29 (49)
Lewis	1705.13 (79)	7.2 (32)	51,275 (27)	0.29 (50)
Lincoln	1576.94 (30)	10.2 (50)	69,010 (59)	0.31 (57)
Madison	1572.23 (28)	14.1 (77)	97,547 (111)	0.28 (47)
Magoffin	1606.00 (40)	2.7 (4)	39,519 (8)	0.14 (6)
Martin	1587.67 (33)	12.1 (59)	88,532 (97)	0.26 (40)
McCreary	1552.91 (23)	3.5 (8)	28,745 (1)	0.25 (36)
Menifee	1544.15 (18)	2.2 (3)	50,338 (26)	0.08 (3)
Monroe	1647.66 (58)	10.7 (52)	63,573 (49)	0.38 (88)
Montgomery	1690.01 (75)	16.8 (95)	77,457 (79)	0.49 (121)
Morgan	1758.65 (98)	4.3 (14)	53,305 (32)	0.17 (13)

Continued

Financial Support of Public Schools (Cont'd)

County	Cost/Pupil Current Expenses (Rank)	% Local Revenue (Rank)	Assessed Value/Pupil in Thousands of Dollars (Rank)	Local Financial Index (Rank)
Owsley	1760.16 (99)	3.6 (9)	44,111 (16)	0.20 (20)
Perry	1532.48 (15)	6.2 (23)	55,561 (36)	0.21 (26)
Pike	1547.89 (21)	12.4 (60)	63,444 (47)	0.36 (79)
Powell	1549.75 (22)	7.5 (36)	48,577 (24)	0.31 (56)
Pulaski	1508.64 (9)	9.8 (47)	92,006 (101)	0.20 (23)
Rockcastle	1573.13 (29)	4.2 (13)	56,362 (38)	0.14 (7)
Rowan	1633.54 (52)	13.9 (76)	78,512 (81)	0.36 (81)
Russell	1608.89 (43)	3.3 (6)	67,397 (53)	0.10 (4)
Wayne	1556.04 (25)	7.4 (34)	40,448 (11)	0.37 (84)
Whitley	1475.38 (3)	1.6 (2)	47,634 (21)	0.06 (1)
Wolfe	1872.81 (133)	1.3 (1)	36,726 (5)	0.08 (2)

*Highest rank = 180.

Source: Kentucky Department of Education, 1983-84.

APPALACHIAN COUNTIES

PERCENT ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED PUPILS

County	Percent Economically Deprived	Rank*
Adair	43.5	122
Bath	43.5	123
Bell	60.5	164
Boyd	23.2	39
Breathitt	65.1	168
Carter	49.8	140
Casey	54.3	155
Clark	23.1	38
Clay	64.5	167
Clinton	72.1	176
Cumberland	59.8	163
Elliott	70.3	174
Estill	42.8	118
Fleming	47.2	134
Floyd	50.7	143
Garrard	30.8	76
Green	32.4	82
Greenup	47.7	135
Harlan	55.5	158
Jackson	66.9	169
Johnson	52.1	149
Knott	59.5	162
Knox	68.8	172
Laurel	45.6	130
Lawrence	53.6	151
Lee	62.0	165
Leslie	53.9	153
Letcher	50.7	144
Lewis	54.0	154
Lincoln	45.0	128
Madison	26.5	57
Magoffin	69.6	173
Martin	46.2	131
McCreary	74.0	178
Menifee	50.6	142
Monroe	53.7	152
Montgomery	40.9	113
Morgan	67.5	170
Owsley	78.8	179
Perry	54.3	156
Pike	43.3	120

Continued

Percent Economically Deprived Pupils (Cont'd)

County	Percent Economically Deprived	Rank
Powell	48.8	138
Pulaski	38.9	106
Rockcastle	56.9	161
Rowan	40.5	112
Russell	44.1	125
Wayne	63.4	166
Whitley	68.6	171
Wolfe	72.3	177

*Highest rank = 1

Source: Kentucky Department of Education, 1983-84